



The Future of US-German Relations (II): Multilateral Cooperation

Working Group of Young Foreign Policy Experts

Key Points

- The US commitment to multilateralism has always been subject to ruptures. But the changes threatened by Trump and already partly realised is of a different kind.
- Germany's interest in well-functioning multilateralism is particularly high in the fields of climate change and global healthcare. The United Nations play a particularly important role in these areas. Germany should employ a two-pronged strategy in these fields: soften the impact of US disengagement while continuing to seek cooperation.
- Where global health is concerned, the key challenge is to prevent an increase in the maternal death rate. Positive measures may include educational initiatives as well as greater investment in specialist medical personnel and technical equipment.
- In the area of global climate policy, Germany can provide support through new sustainability coalitions. Market-based solutions are promising where climate finance and climate risk insurance are concerned.
- Trump's outlook on multilateral cooperation also offers some opportunities. If Germany succeeds in transforming planned savings processes into reform processes, this may strengthen multilateral structures in the long term.

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**New extent of criticism
of multilateralism****German multilateral-
ism against "America
First"****Background**

Donald J. Trump's election as president of the United States of America has prompted an uproar in international politics due to his opposition to the status quo. With his slogan "America First", he intends to review America's role in the world and embark on new paths, particularly in the fields of immigration, trade, climate and security policy. It is still unclear whether or not the Trump administration is in fact seeking to reverse US foreign policy traditions – and if so, what precisely this may entail.

In a series of three papers, the KAS Working Group of Young Foreign Policy Experts came up with a number of suggestions on how German politics should act in view of the ambiguous signals from Washington. Germany and the US are still linked by many different ties, and Germany has benefited greatly from the US's international leadership over the last few decades. But how can this partnership be strengthened so as to withstand the new challenges of the future?

This second paper deals with the development of multilateral cooperation, using health, climate and UN reform as examples. The two other papers deal with trade as well as security and defence policy.

Introduction: Rupture is the rule

Over the last few decades, the US and Europe have acted as crucial drivers in finding solutions to global problems through multilateral cooperation. Working together, they contributed to the successful conclusion of the 2015 Paris climate accord, for example. However, examples of successful cooperation should not distract from the fact that US commitment to multilateralism has been subject to ruptures in the past. These ruptures occasionally entailed major setbacks in the fight for global causes, for instance when George W. Bush rescinded the US commitment to the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. Cooperation within the framework of the United Nations (UN) on the issues dealt with frequently went through very difficult phases. The fact that there are different opinions on both sides of the Atlantic about multilateralism as an instrument to deal with global challenges is nothing new in principle. But the disengagement from multilateral activities proclaimed by US President Trump is of a different kind. Never before has a US president questioned his country's obligations towards multilateral forums and agreements in such an open and fundamental manner.

The blunt anti-multilateralism of the "America First" strategy of the Trump administration is diametrically opposed to the German commitment to effective multilateralism in line with EU partners and the guiding principle of "leading from the centre". While the EU has confirmed its intent to strive for a multilateral, rules-based world order in its Global Strategy of 2016, the US is threatening to steer away from this course. A withdrawal by the US would have negative consequences on the functioning and authority of multilateral institutions and thus weaken the liberal world order. What scenario should Germany and its partners in the EU prepare for? And how will they be able to drive forward multilateral cooperation in areas that are relevant to them – preferably with the involvement of the US?

Multilateral projects under Trump: World health, the fight against climate change and its impact, UN reform

As measured by the announcements and initial actions of the Trump administration, it can be expected that the US will in part curtail its multilateral engagement in connection with the UN massively. At the same time, one can assume that this will not happen to the same radical extent in all areas. To outline what form the disengaging might take and how Germany should respond, we shall examine three areas in which Germany has a particularly strong interest in well-functioning multilateralism: climate change and climate change mitigation, improvement of global health, and UN reform. These three areas have the following in common:

- In all three areas, Germany plays a **pioneering role**, looking back on years of significant involvement. Germany's unbroken history of engagement in these areas also boosts its credibility as a "soft power" placing greater emphasis on multilateralism than other countries.
- Germany has contributed to the development of **multilateral structures** in these areas or been engaged particularly strongly in their reforms. Germany can now make use of these structures and strengthen them in cooperation with like-minded partners – particularly in the event of a clear disengagement on part of the US.
- In all three areas, Germany shares interests with the **European Union (EU)** or at least many of its **European partners**. This is important insofar as one of Germany's key objectives must be to support and defend European unity in its interaction with the Trump administration. Trump will only take his European partners seriously if they act in concert.

For each area, we shall explain what is to be expected from the Trump administration, outline German interests, and put forward proposals on how they can be realised. These are the key questions to be answered:

- What **arguments** can Germany/the EU use to persuade Trump to continue the US's engagement? Germany and the EU must convey their objectives with greater conviction: as good deals for the US. To date, Trump has hardly put forward any ideological reservations with respect to multilateral agreements and alliances. His main argument is that they are too costly for the US. It may therefore be possible to win Trump over for certain forms of cooperation if Germany and the EU can demonstrate the benefits of continued US engagement and the costs of disengagement.
- What are the **red lines** – including rhetorical ones – that Germany/the EU should not cross in the process? This aspect is about clear points of view with respect to their own values.
- What **core competences** and **instruments** does Germany possess to make progress in the individual areas, even without US support?
- Where could Germany/the EU find potential allies? They should be proactive in seeking out existing and **new partners** – both within and outside the US. Partnerships should be diversified more strongly, also looking to the post-Trump future.

US will scale down UN engagement massively

Germany is in demand as a "soft power"

A joint European approach is more important than ever

Germany must sell better deals

Define red lines

Diversify partnerships

Coordinate approach
within the EU

- What role can the EU play in these different areas? What about unity within the EU, and what possibilities does a joint approach offer?

Initiatives and cooperation in the field of global health

Health and security
are inextricably linked

In connection with the G7 and the current G20 presidency, Germany adopted a leading role in the area of global health. The realisation that health, prosperity, stability and security are inextricably linked in a networked world is supported by the fact that the fight against diseases has moved towards the top of the international agenda. The EU has also developed into a stronger actor in the area of global health in recent years. It is a member of the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI) and operates the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, an important institution in the fight against diseases around the world.

In the past, the US has been a reliable partner for Germany, one of the most important pillars of the global health architecture as well as the largest donor in the fight against diseases worldwide. The US provides 11 per cent of the core budget and 18 per cent of the operational budget of the World Health Organization (WHO).¹ There is no other item in the development budget which Washington spends more on than health. Beside humanitarian reasons, it is particularly foreign and security policy interests that underlie the strong engagement in the global fight against diseases, pandemics and maternal deaths.

US is planning drastic
cuts to health pro-
grammes

Everything currently indicates that the Trump administration will not maintain this strong US engagement. The first draft budget for 2018 envisages an 18 per cent cut for the National Institutes of Health and a 28 per cent cut for the US Department of State, from whose budget many multinational health programmes are funded; which specific measures will be affected is not clear yet.

Pursue a two-pronged
strategy: offer coop-
eration, mitigate the
consequences of dis-
engagement

German decision-makers should therefore pursue a two-pronged strategy. For one, Berlin should engage itself more strongly in areas affected particularly strongly by a US disengagement in order to stave off the most damaging consequences. In addition, Germany should still make offers of cooperation to the US administration and stress the strategic importance of global health for stability and security – for the US as well.

The fight against maternal deaths through medical care and education

He had only been in his post for four days when President Trump used an executive order to reinstate the so-called global gag rule, which cuts public funding to any international non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in the provision of abortion advice and care. The global gag rule will have drastic consequences, particularly as Trump has ordered that the rule is to be applied not only to organisations specialising in family planning but all organisations working in healthcare worldwide. Estimates put the resulting funding gap at 600 million US dollars.

Danger of number of
maternal deaths rising

The impact will be all the more serious as NGOs are the only institutions in many areas around the world which families can go to obtain information about legal and safe family planning. Organisations working in the area of HIV/Aids and in malaria prevention will have to significantly curtail or even discontinue their activities as their programmes frequently mention controlled abortion and they will consequently be excluded from US funding in future. The World Health Organization estimates that a woman dies every eight seconds from the consequences of an abortion performed under irregular circumstances. It is highly likely that this number will

increase as a result of the global gag rule. Scientific studies show that this policy does nothing to lower the abortion rate but instead increases it significantly because families no longer have access to advisory services and frequently choose to have unsafe abortions with devastating consequences for the health of women and girls.

By signing the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Germany made a commitment to work towards reducing maternal deaths to fewer than 70 in 100,000 births by 2030. The US government's global gag rule means that it will take considerably longer to reach this target. Decision-makers in Berlin should therefore advocate that the funding of measures that have proven to reduce maternal deaths and improve the health of women, adolescent girls and children should be maintained. Specifically, they should increase international donations to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Some 45 per cent of these funds serve causes including the reduction of infant and maternal mortality and thus have the potential to compensate for part of US disengagement.

Strengthen the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Germany's contribution should also involve an increase in funds for the training of specialist medical personnel and for technical equipment among other things by encouraging private enterprises (including German pharmaceutical businesses) to play their part. It may make sense to pay special attention to countries such as Niger, Mali and Ivory Coast, as West Africa is not only facing special challenges in the area of healthcare but migration movements linked to demographic developments there also have a direct impact on the security situation in Germany and Europe.

Provide funding for specialist medical personnel and technical equipment

Apart from inadequate medical care for pregnant women, it is particularly a lack of knowledge that results in pregnancy endangering the lives of adolescent girls and women in many countries. Thus, contraception and measures to reduce unsafe abortions play a key role in the reduction of maternal deaths. Germany had already been involved in efforts to improve mother and child health through its participation in the Muskoka Initiative from 2011 to 2015 which had been initiated at the G8 summit in 2010. As its contribution, Berlin set up an initiative of its own: "Rights-based Family Planning and Maternal Health" which has helped to improve knowledge and acceptance of and access to modern methods of family planning and increased the number of births attended by health professionals. Decision-makers in Berlin should build on the experiences from that initiative and start a long-term education initiative aimed at increasing knowledge of and access to modern family planning for adolescents and families.

Mother and child health needs better education

Create cooperation opportunities: Health as a strategic security-related goal

Many governments engage in efforts to further global health not only for humanitarian reasons but above all for strategic reasons. This is due to the realisation that initiatives to strengthen global health, such as HIV/Aids prevention or vaccination campaigns, will further economic development and stability. Witnessing the rapid spread of infectious diseases such as swine flu, SARS, Ebola and currently bird flu as well as the anthrax attacks in 2001 have resulted in health being included as a security-related topic in US strategy documents. Furthering global health is a deep-rooted concept among political institutions and decision-makers in the US where foreign and security policy aims are concerned. German decision-makers should take advantage of this narrative to counter the US administration's plans to discontinue funding for global health programmes. The rapid spread of infectious diseases in particular can have drastic consequences for US economic and foreign

Take advantage of the security-related narrative

policy interests – particularly in view of the country’s geographic proximity to Latin America.

Engage in joint efforts in the fight against epidemics

For this reason, obvious areas to push for greater cooperation with the US are the prevention, early detection of and fight against epidemics. German decision-makers should above all aim at strengthening the US engagement with the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA). The GHSA was set up at the instigation of the US in 2014 and commits some 50 countries and organisations to strengthen capacities for the early detection of infectious diseases and the fight against them. Efforts should also include measures to develop and strengthen bilateral collaborations between the US and Germany under the strategic narrative of global health. Suitable partners in the US could, for instance, include the Centre for Global Health Engagement in Washington.

Cooperation potential in vaccine development

In view of Trump’s focus on strengthening the US economic and trade policy, it may be worth considering how German and US companies could cooperate in the development of vaccines to fight infectious diseases.

Initiatives and cooperation in the field of climate / climate protection policy

Consequences of climate change causing migratory movements

Combating climate change is a foreign policy priority for both Germany and the EU. Efforts in this field are guided by the realisation that the impacts of climate change on the regions in the Global South will worsen if climate agreements are not implemented. These regions are already weakened in their fundamental structures by conflict, overpopulation and a lack of resources, with the potential for conflict rising at all times. Competition for resources and a loss of productive land due to climate change is already causing tensions between nomadic and sedentary groups and exacerbating migratory movements around the world as well as the rural exodus. Due to the geographic proximity to some of the African regions affected particularly badly and in view of the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants heading towards Europe, European partners have a strong interest in the implementation of climate-related goals and multilateral cooperation in this area. Consequently, climate policy has a definite security component: sustainable climate protection will help to lessen conflict potential and preserve human habitats.

Germany is respected as a technological pioneer

As a technology pioneer, Germany has also made climate protection one of its declared priorities and placed it at its agenda during the German G7 and G20 presidencies. At the same time, the EU has committed itself to take measures to curb global warming under the Agenda 2030.

Trump will not implement the Paris climate accord

President Trump has vetoed similar efforts on the part of the US. On the very day he took office, all references to climate change were removed from the US government’s official website. Early orders issued by Trump imply his intention of refusing to implement the Paris climate accord. As the legal hurdles for a withdrawal are high, Trump has decided to simply not honour the US commitment, i.e. to not implement the agreement. Instead, the US administration will continue to rely on fossil fuels to create jobs, secure the country’s energy independence and reduce market regulation (for instance through the Executive Presidential Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth of 28 March 2017). The negative attitude towards climate policy is also reflected in the appointments to important cabinet posts and in the draft budget. With the appointment of Scott Pruitt, a self-declared climate protection opponent is heading the US environment agency, the EPA. The White House gave a similar signal by announcing budget cuts of 31 per cent for the

Environmental Protection Agency and of 16 per cent for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

Compensate for lack of US engagement

With its pioneering role in climate protection, Germany should work with its European partners to drive forward resilient energy and climate-related projects – if necessary without the support of the US but always keeping the door open for transatlantic cooperation. Germany and the EU must increase their presence in the regions affected particularly badly by global warming to compensate for the reduction in US engagement. This applies in particular to the Green Climate Fund to which the US had originally pledged three billion US dollars with two billion still outstanding. If these funds are not forthcoming, this will skew the system of North-South compensation, an important pillar of the 2015 Paris climate accord which was intended to support developing countries in their efforts to develop a sustainable society. The German government must consider ways of achieving solid funding.

As climate funding is a core component of German development cooperation, the government should proceed with boldness in this area. Additional funds could come from the already agreed increases in spending on development aid where global climate issues will play an increasingly significant role. There is no need to set up a special fund for this. That said, Germany should forge “sustainability coalitions” of like-minded states with important partner states in Europe and in other regions around the world which would then commit themselves to increase their financial engagement in multilateral forums. That would create a useful arena, in which powerful actors such as Japan, Canada and Australia could act to good effect.

Compensating for a funding shortfall through a “climate coalition of the willing” would have the added advantage that the funding situation as a whole may improve – even if the US was to normalise its engagement again at a later stage. As climate funding will probably generally be less than adequate in the medium term as things stand, this unilateral effort may be an important and welcome preparatory step towards providing a central global public good.

Market-based solutions and cooperation in climate research

While the signs for a cooperative climate protection policy are currently not good at the transatlantic level, there are some chinks of light, particularly in the area of market-based solutions (e.g. where climate finance and climate risk reinsurance are concerned). Here, private sector actors must in any case take on the main financial burden – in this case private banks and insurance companies – and the function of the state-owned development banks is merely to create a functioning market environment and reduce the risks for market entrants. Realising business models in this potentially large market can be profitable as can cooperation below government level, for instance cooperation between the KfW (one of the world’s largest development banks) and private sector actors on both sides of the Atlantic involved in projects aimed at activating these new markets. Making reference to such projects can also be helpful when speaking to other parties, for instance to explain to contacts on the other side of the Atlantic that investments in climate protection are also in their national interest.

There is also potential for collaboration in basic and applied research in the areas of climate, energy and sustainability (key phrase: Advanced Sustainability Studies) which could greatly encourage innovation. In view of the high level of technological

North-South compensation under threat

Climate funding is a key element of German development cooperation

Forge sustainability coalitions

Putting faith in market-based solutions

Collaboration potential in basic and applied science

excellence and the top-class university landscapes in Germany and the US, furthering a partnership between the two countries would be an obvious approach. Consequently, efforts should be made to provide greater support for scientific programmes and research institutions in the area of climate research. Wherever possible, this should involve US institutions that may otherwise have to abandon their work due to the budget cuts imposed by their government.

Diversify channels of cooperation

Potential partners can also be found among US federal states, some of which are working towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In late March, 75 mayors sent an open letter to the president, in which they presented their Mayors National Climate Action Agenda. In this letter, they criticised the president for cancelling his predecessor's Green Power Plan and stressed the economic benefit of an active climate protection policy instead. The German government should react positively to such signals. Germany must make greater efforts to cooperate with such initiatives that are already involved in climate protection work and promote the implementation of agreed standards. Collaborations with federal states and city partnerships as well as the involvement of the private sector and the scientific community will in the long term succeed in making an impact on public opinion in the US. The way forward must be to continue involving the US through numerous channels and putting across convincing arguments.

Improve rather than defend

Initiatives and cooperation with regard to UN reform

The focus on cost that colours Trump's view of multilateral cooperation does not only entail dangers. It also offers the opportunity to initiate changes that can strengthen multilateral structures in the long term. After all, these structures are by no means perfect. They have developed dynamics of their own over time that undermine the efficiency of the respective organisations and their capacity to act. The US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, is not unjustified in her question as to how much of the US funding for UN peacekeeping operations truly serves the aim of peacekeeping. Beside the US, Germany as well as important partners in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. Canada) are also major financial contributors to the UN in general and UN peacekeeping in particular. They consequently share the United States' justified interest in ensuring their financial contributions are used sensibly.

Convert savings pro- cesses into reform processes

Germany should respond to Trump's allusions to planned cuts to multilateral organisations and his readiness to put existing cooperation structures fundamentally into question by initiating or driving forward essential reforms of multilateral forums. First and foremost, this means transforming the savings processes announced by Trump to reform processes. The draft budget that the Trump administration published in mid-March thus includes significant reductions in payments to the UN. The cuts affect the State Department particularly strongly and it is from this department's budget (via the Bureau of International Organization Affairs) that UN programmes such as peacekeeping, UNICEF and UNDP are funded. Where the savings are to be made precisely is still unclear; but they are likely to hit peacekeeping where the US share is to be reduced from currently over 28 per cent (of the entire peacekeeping budget) to the maximum share of 25 per cent set down in US legislation.

Define checking crite- ria for cuts and moni- tor their application

Germany should work towards these types of cuts to be made on the basis of a speedy but thorough review of existing structures. Germany should take an active part in defining budget-cut criteria and monitor their consistent application closely. Where measures to be taken in view of monitoring are concerned, Germany should, where appropriate, put forward constructive proposals for the improvement and

strengthening of programmes as an alternative to their termination. In this context, Germany can take Nikki Haley at her word: in a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations on 29 March 2017, she stressed that the planned savings were not an end in themselves but were first and foremost about enhancing the UN's capacity to act.

Its image as an avowed supporter of multilateralism and its own high financial contribution to the UN budget should give Germany credibility in this endeavour. It is likely to find cooperation partners for its policy not only among other major UN funding providers but in the US as well, among those Republicans in the US Congress who are known to be critical of the proposed cuts to the State Department.

1| *On the topic of the UN budget and potential cuts see also the paper by Dr. Stefan Friedrich at <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.48455/>.*

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*Further information at
<http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.6391/>*

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